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SUBJECT: RC South: Dutch PRT Overview

REFTEL: Kabul 2780

¶1. (U) Summary. Dutch Embassy representatives gave ISAF's PRT Working Group Secretariat an overview of the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Uruzgan province. The Dutch Embassy is unsure of the effects of its expiring mandate to lead the PRT, noting that its PRT will become civilian-led and station its representatives at the district level. The number and location of these district-level PRTs have not been determined. Dutch development looks to cooperate with NGOs, its German counterpart, and the Afghan government. End summary.

¶2. (U) The parliamentary mandate for The Netherlands' "military lead" will expire in 2010; however, the mandate for development aid will continue. How this will work out in practice at the PRT is not clear to the Dutch Embassy. In the interim, the Dutch will continue to create an increasingly civilian PRT (reftel). Currently the civilian chief representative "sits next to" the military commander (in effect, the civilian chief representative is the co-commander), and is the lead for governance and development issues. In March 2009 the civilian chief's current deputy will take over as the PRT commander, with a "steering committee" created above him. This model was developed by studying the Canadian-led PRT in Kandahar.

¶3. (SBU) Dutch policy is to support the local provincial government. It currently funds twelve Afghan government Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG) advisors who work directly for the governor. Gubernatorial advisors serve to strengthen the ties between the governor and line ministers to "offset the influence of local power brokers who have direct access to the Presidential palace." As long as Governor Hamdam is in power the Dutch will support him, but his political position is not secure. To help address popularity and management issues, the Dutch PRT has encouraged the Governor to visit the districts more often, but with limited success.

¶4. (U) Travel in the province is difficult, and requires a military escort. To overcome the resulting provincial capital bias in PRT reporting, the Dutch plan to station civilians at the district level for one to two weeks at a time. The number and location of these district-level efforts remain to be determined.

¶5. (U) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Development Cooperation (administratively part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the

Ministry of the Interior are the main Dutch players on the PRT. After early friction, civilian-military cooperation in the Dutch PRT in Uruzgan is now excellent, according to the Dutch Embassy. Early joint pre-deployment training helped resolve early problems, creating a better sense of teamwork.

Looking for Partners

¶16. (SBU) The bulk of the Dutch development funds flow directly to the central government in Kabul. The PRT project budget itself is controlled by the embassy in Kabul, but the embassy laments that it only receives reports on specific projects "in bits and pieces." Dutch development focus is primarily on health, education, irrigation, infrastructure, and alternative livelihood projects. The Ministry of the Interior program is focused on counternarcotics and police mentoring, and will soon bring in five additional Dutch police mentors. The Dutch PRT also has access to a Dutch post-conflict stability fund that can be used to build installations such as police stations.

¶17. (SBU) The general Dutch PRT policy is to engage with NGOs and use local contractors as often as possible. Due to security concerns, however, few NGOs are active in the region (although UNAMA plans to open a provincial office in Tarin Kowt); therefore, it is not always possible for the PRT to work with local NGOs. For their own security, local NGOs acceptable to the embassy often do not wish to be publicly identified as a partner. As a result, projects with local NGOs are typically very small scale and very low profile.

KABUL 00002986 002 OF 002

¶18. (U) The main partners of the PRT are "Dutch Consortium Uruzgan" which consists of four to five Dutch or Dutch-led NGOs, and the German development agency (Dutch Development works very closely with its German counterpart around the world).

¶19. (U) In the Dutch Embassy view, the provincial development plan (PDP) is working well and is the basis for all projects. The Dutch PRT will, however, consider local non-PDP ideas for projects. A PRT executive steering committee is attempting to revive the local Provincial Development Council and improve the relevance of the PDP.

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